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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence

23 April 1975

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam
(As of 1600 EDST)
No. 22

Military Action

1. The lull is continuing. Some Communist units are reported to still be having difficulty moving enough supplies forward and there could be some additional delay before some units are ready to resume the attack, but most evidence points to direct assaults on Saigon's outer defenses this week or by the end of the month at the latest. Communist units in the past month have sometimes been slow moving into weakly defended or abandoned areas -- in many cases the combat units merely got ahead of their supply columns. Such difficulties around Saigon are expected to be rectified shortly.

2. Strong North Vietnamese counterattacks against government troops and positions in Tay Ninh Province again closed the road to the provincial capital, probably for the last time. The South Vietnamese were also forced from the Rach Kien District town in Long An Province just ten miles southwest of Saigon. This position is east of Route 4 and the Communists now threaten the road from both sides. It also gives them a new approach to Saigon's southern suburbs.

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NSA review(s)
completed.

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Hanoi Using Southern Ports

3. The North Vietnamese are moving supplies by sea into the former government ports as far south as Nha Trang. [redacted] a number of small coastal vessels and barges unloading at Nha Trang. Similar activity has been previously noted at Qui Nhon and Da Nang and it is expected the North Vietnamese will soon begin using their newly-acquired port facilities as far south as Ham Tan, including Cam Ranh Bay and Phan Thiet.

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308th Division Still in North

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4. The North Vietnamese 308th Division apparently has remained in the Hanoi area and has not followed the rest of the 1st Corps south to the Saigon area [redacted]

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5. In addition to the newly arrived 1st Corps forces, the Communists have shifted at least four other line divisions into Military Region 3 from northern and central South Vietnam. They now outnumber the government forces by more than two to one. With such a large force on hand, Hanoi may have decided to withhold the 308th Division.

Saigon Generals Captured

6. Hanoi Radio announced on April 23 that Lt. General Nguyen Vinh Nghi and Brig. General Pham Ngoc Sang were captured. General Nghi was the commander of the Military Region 3 Forward Command at Phan Rang and General Sang was the commander of the South Vietnamese Air Force 6th Division. These men and their staffs were unable to fly from Phan Rang when it fell to the Communists last week, because rebellious ranger troops seized and took off in the only available rescue aircraft. Nghi and Sang were last thought to be retreating through the forest south toward Phan Thiet.

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Trying for a Dialogue

7. In the face of Communist intransigence, South Vietnam's new president, Tran Van Huong, still appears to be trying to open some sort of political dialogue. He met twice today with the French ambassador to Saigon and recalled his chief negotiator in Paris, Ambassador Phong, for "urgent" discussions.

8. What Huong has in mind is not clear, but he appears hopeful that the Viet Cong will accept some offer of political dialogue with the government short of surrender discussions. The French government, which has been in contact with Communist representatives in Paris, apparently still believes that such talks can be arranged. Ambassador Phong, whose opinion probably has been influenced heavily by the optimistic line of the French, also shares that view.


9. Most political opposition leaders, such as former vice-president Nguyen Cao Ky and General "Big" Minh, also retain hope that some form of solution short of surrender might be arranged. But they recognize that the Communists will not negotiate with the remnants of the Thieu regime and that the first order of business is to replace it with one that hopefully meets Communist specifications.

10. In typical South Vietnamese fashion, however, there is considerable disunity among various opposition elements. Four of the principal oppositionists -- Catholic leader Father Thanh, "Big" Minh, former senate chairman Huyen, and Buddhist activist Vu Van Mau -- met today to prepare a joint statement demanding that President Huong step aside and allow a new cabinet to take charge. The statement was to have carried a threat of public demonstrations should Huong refuse to step down, but the four were unable to agree on the procedures under which a new cabinet would operate.

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11. There now is some doubt that Vu Van Mau and the An Quang Buddhist elements he represents will endorse the statement. Their refusal to do so would only further delay the formation of a government with some chance of dealing with the Communists. Moreover, there are no indications that the military would support any arrangement which the political opposition can agree on. Despite the precarious situation in South Vietnam, this element's support -- or at least its agreement not to interfere -- is still needed before a new government can be formed.

12. President Huong reportedly accepted the resignation of the Can cabinet "in principle" today but requested that it remain in office "several more days" until he can select a replacement. Huong gave no indications with whom he has been discussing various positions, but stated that he hoped to have a new government formed by Friday.

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